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MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES

2 of 5

CLAREMONT
SANTACRUZ
FERNANDEZ

X-MEN

DIE BY THE SWORD



ORACLE IS
WATCHING



DIRECT EDITION

new EXCALIBUR

Led by OmniVersal Champion **Captain Britain** and working in collaboration with MI-13 agent **Pete Wisdom**, the London-based **Excalibur** stands as a beacon of hope for Great Britain, rising to meet any threat to the British.



Brian Braddock
CAPTAIN BRITAIN



Pete Wisdom



(unknown)
SAGE



Alison Blaire
DAZZLER



Tj Wagner
NOCTURNE

Pulled together from various disparate realities and led by **Sabretooth** and **Blink**, two survivors of the Age of Apocalypse, the Exiles travel from one universe to the next, repairing damaged realities and protecting the integrity of the OmniVerse.

EXILES



Clarice Ferguson
BLINK
EARTH - 295



Victor Creed
SABRETOOTH
EARTH - 295



Kevin Sydney
MORPH
EARTH - 1081



Betsy Braddock
PSYLOCKE
EARTH - 616



Longshot
MOJOVERSE



Cat Pryde
SHADOWCAT
UNKNOWN



Raphael-Raven Darkholme
MYSTIQ
EARTH - 292



Anna Raven
ROGUE
EARTH - 1009



John Proudstar
THUNDERBIRD
EARTH - 1100

Previously...

Having successfully defeated the attempted overthrow of Britain by Albion, the members of Excalibur are happily enjoying a celebration of their victory. Things get even better for two of their number with the unexpected arrival of Brian's twin sister, Betsy (perhaps better known by her code-name, Psylocke) and, to the astonished delight of Nocturne, her own true love, Thunderbird, who she'd believed lost for her forever.

For them, it's happy days all around.

Unfortunately, it doesn't last.

When Brian answers yet another knock at the door, he's greeted by a young woman wearing a mask of armor and leading a force of deadly-looking warriors. She makes her intentions plain by stabbing him in the chest, mortally close to his heart.

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LONDON.

ON A NIGHT OF JUBILEE, AS THE NATION JOYOUSLY CELEBRATES ITS VICTORY OVER ITS WOULD-BE CONQUEROR, ALBION--



THE
EMPEROR
MATILDA
DOCKS--



--HOME AND HEADQUARTERS OF EXCALIBUR, WHERE THE CHEERS OF JOY OF THE CROWD OF GUESTS--



...SUDDENLY GIVE WAY TO EXPRESSIONS OF SHOCK AND DISBELIEF.

ONE WAR MAY BE OVER, BUT A NEW ONE'S JUST BEGUN...



...AND CLAIMED ITS FIRST CASUALTY.

FIRST BLOOD

by Chris Claremont & Juan Santacruz

BRIAN!

WHUMP

RAUL FERNANDEZ
INKER

ROB RO

COLORIST

SIMON BOWLAND

LETTERER

JELENA KEVIC-

DJURDJEVIC

COVER ART

JORDAN D. WHITE

ASSISTANT EDITOR

MARK PANICIA

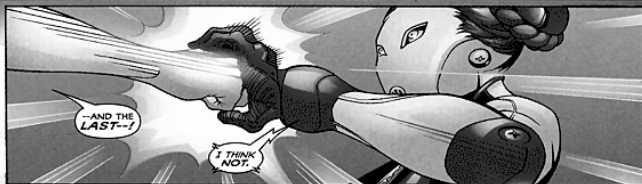
SENIOR EDITOR

JOE QUESADA

EDITOR IN CHIEF

DAN BUCKLEY

PUBLISHER





...IT'S ONLY THE
BEGINNING.



IT'S THE
NUMBERS THAT
MAKE THE CRUCIAL
DIFFERENCE.



FOR EACH OF HER
ADVERSARIES BETSY
TAKES DOWN...



SHE'S
HAMMERED BY A
COUPLE OR THREE
OF HIS COMRADES.



SHE'S DETERMINED TO
SURVIVE WHAT COMES
NEXT, BUT SHE KNOWS
IT'LL PROBABLY HURT.

MORE TO THE POINT,
SHE'S DESPERATELY WORRIED
ABOUT HER BROTHER, WHO'S
LYING AMIDST AN INCREASINGLY
WIDENING POOL OF BLOOD.





TJ. GET THE CIVILIANS OUT OF HERE.

I DO WHAT I'M MADE TO DO.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

JUST SO YOU DON'T FORGET, THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU DO BEST.

BE CAREFUL, JOHN.



I ALMOST LOST YOU ONCE. I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN AGAIN-- ESPECIALLY WHEN I'VE BARELY GOTTEN YOU BACK.

LET'S GET THE CIVILIANS MOVING OUT OF HERE, DOC.

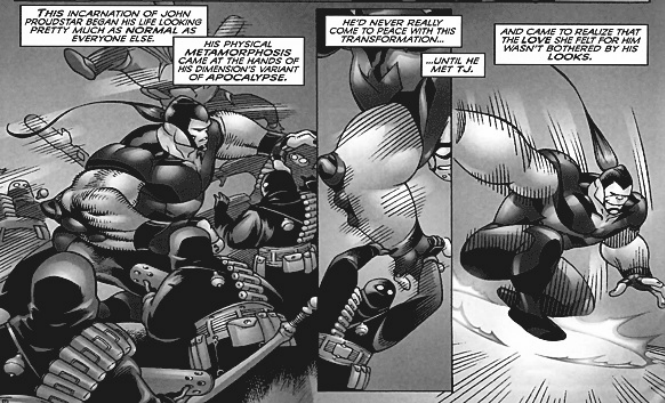
THIS INCARNATION OF JOHN PROUDSTAR BEGAN HIS LIFE LOOKING PRETTY MUCH AS NORMAL AS EVERYONE ELSE.

HIS PHYSICAL METAMORPHOSIS CAME AT THE HANDS OF HIS DIMENSION'S VARIANT OF APOCALYPSE.

HE'D NEVER REALLY COME TO PEACE WITH THIS TRANSFORMATION...

...UNTIL HE MET TJ.

AND CAME TO REALIZE THAT THE LOVE SHE FELT FOR HIM WASN'T BOTHERED BY HIS LOOKS.





MEANWHILE BACK
WITH SAGE...







WHAT IS IT
WITH YOU BLOODY
SKINTIGHTS?

A BLOKE
STEPS OUT FOR A
FEW MINUTES OF
PRIVACY...

AND
THE WHOLE
EVENING GOES
STRAIGHT TO
BLAZES.



THIS
ROUGE-WOMAN
LOOKS LIKE THE
KEY.

IF I CAN
POSSESS HER, TAKE
HER OUT OF THE
EQUATION--



--OUCH!

SO MUCH FOR THAT
IDEA.



RELAX
YOUR BODY,
T.J. I'VE GOT
YOU.

NICE
TRY. THAT, GIRL.
CAN'T FAULT YOUR
IMPULSES, OR YOUR
COURAGE.



"PEARS THAT
BODY-ARMOR
PROTECTS HER
AGAINST MORE
THAN GUNFIRE.



T.J. WHAT
ARE YOU DOING?/
THEY'RE JUST BULLETS--
YOU KNOW I'VE SURVIVED
WAY HARDER HITS
THAN THIS.

BACK
OFF, GIRL--
PLEASE--AND
LET US DEAL
WITH THESE
GUYS.



"Y'KNOW,
FOR ALL THE
DAMAGE YOU
GUYS HAVE DONE
HER PALS...

...THIS
LADY DOESN'T
LOOK TERRIBLY
BOTHERED.



BRIAN'S BARELY BREATHING. WISDOM, IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?

OUTTA MY HANDS, LUV. I DUNNO ANYONE CAN HELP WITH A WOUND LIKE THIS.

THIS WORLD CAN BE SO BLOOD-USELESS!

WE HAVE TO GET HIM TO THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

ALISON-- WE NEED COVER!



YOU GOT IT, BETS!

AND JUST LIKE THAT, FASTER THAN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, ALISON BLAIRE STEALS EVERY SOUND IN THE ROOM...



...AND TRANSFORMS THEM INTO LIGHT ALMOST TOO BRILLIANT TO BE ENDURED.

THE EFFECT DOESN'T LAST LONG.



IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE STELLAR LIGHT IS GONE.

BUT SO TOO ARE THE HEROES.



GOOD MOVE.

BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE, OUR BATTLE HAS BARELY BEGUN.

ALL YOU'VE WON FOR YOURSELF IS THE BRIEFEST REPRIEVE.

THE
STARLIGHT
CITADEL...

...HOME OF
THE CELESTIAL
MAJESTERA.
ROMA...

...DEFENDER OF
THE OMNIVERSE.

CRASH



MAJESTERA,
THE ALARMS
SOUNDED, THERE
WAS A CRY--

--ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?



IT'S BRIAN
BRADDOCK.

I'VE
LOST
HIM.

NO PSYCHIC
CONTACT OR SPIRITUAL
AWARENESS. NOT THE
SLIGHTEST SENSE OF
BEING.



ONE MOMENT HE WAS
THERE, IN MY THOUGHTS, AN
AWARENESS OF HIM STRONG
IN MY SOUL--



--THE
NEXT, HE WAS
GONE.

YOU
MEAN, HE'S
DEAD.



I--
DON'T
KNOW.



I'VE NEVER HEARD YOU TALK LIKE THIS.

I'VE NEVER FACED A DAY LIKE THIS.

LIKE WHAT?



WHERE EVERYTHING'S IN QUESTION, AND ALL BECOMES FINITE.

FOR SUCH AS YOU, THAT'S THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE. TO HAVE A BEGINNING AND AN END.

FOR ME, THAT'S SOMETHING NEW. NEITHER IMAGINED, NOR FACED.



ARE YOU SAYING THIS COULD BE THE END FOR YOU?

IT'S-- POSSIBLE. WHY DOES THAT MAKE YOU SMILE?



IT MAKES YOU A BIT MORE LIKE ME--

--AND THAT GIVES ME A DECENT CHANCE TO WIN.

BUT YOUR FIGHT ISN'T WITH ME.



THAT. ROMA, IS WHERE YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN WRONG.

I SERVE BECAUSE I BELIEVED I HAD NO CHOICE. I'M MORTAL. YOU'RE A GOD.



BUT IF YOU'RE NOT, IF THE SCALES ARE EVEN JUST A LITTLE BIT EQUAL...

THEN WHO KNOWS WHAT'LL HAPPEN NEXT, OR WHO WILL ULTIMATELY PREVAIL?



PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR THE OMNIVERSE TO CHANGE?

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
THE REALMS OF WHAT IS AND
WHAT MIGHT BE OF REALITY
AND OF DREAMS...

...THAT'S WHERE
YOU'LL FIND THE
CRYSTAL PALACE,
HEADQUARTERS
OF THE EXILES...

SABRETOOTH--

--GET
HEATHER--

--WE
NEED HELP--
NOW!

BLINK--
ALL OF YOU
EXILES--

--GET OVER
TO THE TRANSIT
BAY--RIGHT
NOW!

WE GOT AN
EMERGENCY!

TAKE IT
EASY, BETS.
I GOT HIM!

CAREFUL,
CREED. HE'S BADLY
WOUNDED.

COMPUTER,
PREP THE **MEDICAL**
BAY. WE GOT
CASUALTIES!

ALREADY IN
PROCESS. SABRETOOTH.
ALL SCANNING AND
TREATMENT SYSTEMS
COMING ONLINE.



WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT--

--TJ?



IS THAT REALLY YOU?



HYA, MORPH.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HOW YA BEEN?

I FEEL GREAT, OH MAN, YOU LOOK GREAT. THIS IS JUST WONDERFUL!



WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

WHY'D MR. CREED SOUND THE ALARM?!

MYSTIQ-- YOU AND ROGUE STAY BACK UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WHAT.

I'M CALLED BLINK.

THIS IS HOME TO THE EXILES.

I'M NOT SURE WHO YOU ARE, BUT I'M GOING TO ASSUME YOU'RE FRIENDS.

I'M CALLED SAGE, WE'RE MEMBERS OF A TEAM KNOWN AS EXCALIBUR.

ONE OF YOUR PEOPLE, PSYLOCKE, AND ONE OF OURS, CAPTAIN BRITAIN, ARE SIBLINGS.





WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, WHERE'D THAT WOMAN GO?

CUT HER SOME SLACK, BLINK. PLEASE.

I THINK SHE'S JUST HAD A REALLY PRIMAL SHOCK.



HEY, GUYS, YOU GOT TROUBLE OVER THERE?

SOMETHING JUST FRIED ALL THE SCANNERS IN THE TRANSPORT BAY.



MY GOD-THAT'S PRYDE. IS THIS SOME SORT OF X-MEN SUBSET?



IF I MIGHT, BLINK, I'LL GO FIND OUR MISSING VISITOR.

NO OFFENSE, MYSTIG, BUT YOU'RE A NEW ARRIVAL YOURSELF.

SO?

WHAT BETTER WAY TO LEARN THE LOCAL GEOGRAPHY?



BLINK, GUYS, WE NEED HELP.

I'VE BEEN TOLD TO GATHER SOMEONE NAMED SAGE.

IT'S A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.



I'M PETE WISDOM.

LIKE YOU, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON, SO WHAT SAY WE BOTH FIND OUT TOGETHER, EHT?

BY THE WAY, ANY HOPE OF GETTING SOME PROPER CLOTHES?



LONGSHOT
DOESN'T
REMEMBER
ME.



I FEEL
LIKE MY HEART'S
BREAKING--



--ONLY
THIS TIME, WHEN I
DIE, I WON'T GET
BETTER.



I WON'T
WAKE UP.

THANK
GOD.



MOJO
MUST HAVE DONE
SOMETHING TO HIM,
TREATED HIM JUST
LIKE SOME KIND
OF TOY.

JUST LIKE
I'LL BET HE DID
SOMETHING TO
ME.



NO MATTER
WHAT WE DO, HOW
HARD WE FIGHT HIM,
HOW OFTEN WE SEEM
TO WIN...

...IN THE END,
MOJO ALWAYS
SEEMS TO COME
OUT AHEAD.



I
DON'T MEAN TO
INTERRUPT...

...BUT
CAN YOU
FLYP

NOPE.

IN THAT CASE, IT MIGHT NOT BE WISE TO STAND THERE.

IT LOOKS A VERY LONG WAY DOWN.

DOESN'T MATTER. WHATEVER WAY I MANAGE TO GET MYSELF KILLED...

I ALWAYS SEEM TO GET BETTER.

BRAVO FOR YOU, MY DEAR.

BUT THE QUESTION THAT ACTUALLY COMES TO MY MIND IS SIMPLY...

...HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GET YOURSELF BACK UP?

GOOD POINT.

I ACTUALLY HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT.

YOU KNOW THAT YOUNG MAN?

HE DOESN'T REMEMBER ME--NOT ANYMORE.

THAT ANY REASON TO RUN AWAY?

I...DON'T KNOW.

EVERY TIME I TRY TO REBUILD MY LIFE, THERE'S SOME KIND OF EARTHQUAKE.

PERHAPS SO-- BUT IT APPEARS TO ME THAT EACH TIME YOU GET BURIED...

...YOU FIND A WAY TO DIG YOURSELF FREE AND START AGAIN.

NOT SO BAD A THING, YOU KNOW, TO HAVE SUCH AN INDOMITABLE WILL.

IF ONLY I KNEW WHAT TO DO WITH IT.







BEEN WONDERING. BETS, YOU AN' BRIAN, ARE YOU TWO REALLY TWINS?

IT'S A VERY LONG STORY.

WHICH I TRULY CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR--



--BUT BEFORE WE GET DOWN TO BUSINESS, MY LOVE, D'YOU LOT HAVE ANYTHING AROUND HERE RESEMBLING DECENT COFFEE?



AND I THOUGHT THE LAST VIEW WAS SOMETHING.

HOW FAR DOES THIS WATER GO?

I'VE FLOWN AN HOUR, STRAIGHT OUT TO SEA, AND SEEN NOTHING BUT OPEN WATER.

TELL ME ABOUT ALBION, WISDOM.



THAT'S EASY, PETAL. JUST LOOK AT YOUR BROTHER, AND IMAGINE HIM GROWING UP IN A WORLD AT WAR.



IF THAT MEANS COLLATERAL DAMAGE, SAY TO CIVILIANS, THAT'S A SAD THING AND HE'S VERY SORRY, HE'LL TRULY GRIEVE--

--BUT BY HIS LIGHTS, IT'S A NECESSITY OF VICTORY.

THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT RIGHT, WHAT HE'S DONE.

BUT BAD THINGS HAPPEN IN WAR, CAN'T BE HELPED.

IT'S A SHAME.

WHY?



YOU TALK WITH HIM, YOU GET A SENSE OF WHAT HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH WHO HE IS.

MY TURN, PETAL-- WHY DO YOU ASK?

THEY TALK FOR QUITE A WHILE...

THING TO REMEMBER IS, ALBION'S NOT EVIL, HE'S A SOLDIER, BETS, HE DOES WHAT'S NEEDED TO WIN.

--AND THEN, BETSY RETURNS TO HER BROTHER'S SIDE, PRAYING THAT HIS BIO-READINGS WILL IMPROVE, REFUSING TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT THEY WON'T.

BETSY, I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT YOU'RE NEEDED.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, CLARICE.

THERE'S NOTHING MORE I CAN DO HERE.

HAVE FAITH IN YOUR INSTINCTS, BETSY-GIRL...

...AS YOUR BROTHER TRUSTS HIS--

--AND THINGS WILL TURN OUT *ALL* RIGHT IN THE END.

SINCE YOUR BROTHER WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT ROMA AND THE CAPTAIN CORPS...

...IT SEEMED SMART TO HAVE CAT CHECK THEM OUT.

LEMME GUESS, SPROUT--

--BRILLIANT IDEA, LOUSY OUTCOME.

THIS IS A *LIVE* IMAGE OF ROMA'S HEADQUARTERS, A PLACE CALLED THE *STARLIGHT CITADEL*.



NEXT: *WHEN FALLS
A DREAM!*





ORACLE IS
WATCHING